United Nations E/ICEF/2005/P/L.13

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
29 March 2005

Original: English

For action

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2005
6-10 June 2005
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Draft country programme document**

Albania

Summary

The Executive Director presents the draft country programme document for Albania for discussion and comments. The Executive Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of $3,375,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and $12,000,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2006 to 2010.

* E/ICEF/2005/7.

** In accordance with Executive Board decision 2002/3 (E/ICEF/2002/8), the present document will be revised and posted on the UNICEF website in October 2005, together with the summary results matrix. It will then be approved by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2006.

05-28703 (E) 210405

Basic data[†] *(2003 unless otherwise stated)*	
Child population (millions, under 18 years)	1.1
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	21
Underweight (%, moderate and severe, 2000)	14
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2001)	23[‡]
Primary school enrolment (% net, male/female, 2002)	91/93
Primary schoolchildren reaching grade 5 (%, 2002)	88
Use of improved drinking water sources (%, 2002)	97
Adult HIV prevalence rate (%)	N/A
Child work (%, children 5-14 years old)	23
GNI per capita (US$)	1 740
One-year-olds immunized against DPT3 (%)	97
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	93

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women are available at www.unicef.org.
[‡] WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA joint estimate is 55 per 100,000 births, adjusted for the well-documented problems of underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths.

The situation of children and women

1. One third of Albania's 3.1 million people are under 18 years of age. These children have more opportunity than ever before for a brighter future but they also face unparalleled vulnerabilities. In the last decade, Albania has made a number of far reaching transformations and has begun its task of modern nation-building. However, much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed in the aftermath of the Government's fall in 1991 and the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997. An estimated 20 per cent of the population left the country and another 25 per cent moved from rural to peri-urban areas.

2. From 1998, economic indicators have been encouraging. Gross domestic product (GDP) has grown about 7 per cent per year. Yet Albania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, with GDP per capita of around $1,450 and significant geographic, ethnic and income disparities. According to the Living Standards Measurement Survey (2002), one quarter of the population and one third of children live in poverty (less than $2 a day per person). Almost half the poor are under 21 years of age.

3. Disparities between rural and urban areas and the low status of the Roma population are major impediments to development. From 1989 to 2000, the urban population increased from 36 to 54 per cent of the total population. Rates of poverty in rural areas are almost 70 per cent higher than in Tirana, the capital. With people migrating, such services as education and health care have virtually collapsed. Infant mortality rates in some parts of the northeast are three times the national average.

4. Poverty, decreased access to basic social services and weakened community support mechanisms have limited the ability of families to provide a nurturing and protective environment for children. The existing national child protection system is

weak. As a result, children who are subject to violence and abuse are often left undetected, and there are limited services for those who are identified. However, some important progress has been made: the Child Rights Unit has been established in the Prime Minister's Office and has plans to review the national strategy on children; a national strategy against child trafficking has been adopted; and a rights-based juvenile justice system is being put in place. Significant investments will be needed to turn these plans into concrete actions.

5. Albania's school system needs major investment and reform. Out-of-date curricula and teaching methods, poorly qualified teachers and a lack of modern equipment and sanitation contribute to increasing drop-out rates. Enrolment rates are particularly low among marginalized groups such as Roma and children with disabilities. Currently, the Government spends 2.7 per cent of GDP on education. The Government's 2004 annual review highlighted the urgency to mitigate increasing rates of illiteracy, drop out and hidden drop out (when children are present in the classroom but not learning).

6. The proportion of children enrolled in pre-school has decreased sharply since the 1990s. It is estimated that only 10 per cent of children up to three years of age have access to crèches, while 44 per cent of the 3-6-year age group attend kindergarten. To remedy this situation, the Government has set up an interministerial task force to ensure that each ministry contributes with plans and investments to early childhood development (ECD).

7. Women and girls, especially in rural areas, face discrimination. A recent nationwide survey reported that 8 per cent of women had experienced domestic violence and 25 per cent had experienced some form of abuse. Early marriage, arranged marriage and selective abortion all take place.

8. A decade of insecurity, declining opportunities and lack of attention to young people's needs have left many of them alienated. Prospects for employment remain low, encouraging a 'brain drain' and crime.

9. Although the country had only 141 confirmed HIV infections in December 2004, national projections indicate the number of infected people may reach 10,000-15,000 by 2010. Seventy per cent of cases have been detected among returning migrants. Other populations at increased risk include injecting drug users and commercial sex workers. The disease is increasingly being 'feminized' in Albania, with women accounting for 47 per cent of new cases in 2004 as opposed to 19 per cent in 2002 and 23 per cent in 2003. The National Strategy on HIV/AIDS was adopted in 2004, but the surveillance system remains weak.

10. The Government has increasingly demonstrated its commitment to improve living standards. This is also reflected in two key planning documents: The National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (NSSED), launched in November 2001, and the Strategy for Decentralization. Since 2002, Albania has been negotiating a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. This is motivating a growing civil society movement that calls for a society founded on human rights principles.

11. Another positive step has been the decision by the Government to decentralize power and authority to the local level (commune and municipality). This process has started with the devolution of administrative responsibilities for the social sector to

municipalities. There also are plans for financial decentralization. Because of limited institutional capacity, this is a tremendous challenge for local government.

12. The Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomed Albania's first country report, submitted in January 2005. It acknowledged the progress made in developing policies and laws for children. It also recommended the continuation of the progress made to align existing laws with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to strengthen the implementation of laws and policies and their enforcement.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2001-2005

Key results achieved

13. The previous country programme of cooperation centred on the promotion of child survival, youth development and participation, and child protection, with a focus on the development of a legislative framework and key social policies.

14. Polio eradication was achieved in 2002 and has been sustained. A sustainable financing mechanism for immunization was established by the Government. Measles immunization coverage rose from 64 per cent in 2000 to 93 per cent in 2003.

15. The NSSED recognizes the need for innovative models to advance the integration of the country's marginalized populations, and has endorsed several specific examples for children and young people. The Government has established the Child Rights Unit in the Prime Minister's office. The Family Code and the National Strategy on Children have been revised. A package of legislation on juvenile justice has been adopted. National strategies have been adopted for social services, HIV/AIDS, youth and children with disabilities. A National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking of Children has been approved. A life skills manual and methodology endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science have aided teaching of life skills in secondary schools, with a focus on HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, gender relations and violence, using participatory methods.

16. To facilitate coordination among different entities addressing children's issues, several networks and coalitions were created. UNICEF supported the establishment of 'All Together Against Child Trafficking' a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working against child trafficking; an NGO coalition on HIV/AIDS; a network of 50 ECD partners including NGOs and academia; an interministerial working group on early childhood care issues; and the Children's Alliance, a nationwide child rights advocacy coalition of 150 NGOs. Within the Gardens of Mothers and Children project, parents' boards have been created to encourage fathers' participation in child-rearing and mothers' role in family decision-making.

17. In areas where services were lacking, pilot models have been supported to demonstrate effective, low-cost approaches. These include Youth Albania Professional Services, an initiative that reintegrates marginalized youth into society while providing them with gainful employment; the 'hidden drop out' approach, which teaches educators to tailor minimal necessary learning objectives for children with learning difficulties; "youth-friendly" services in two cities, *Troç* ("Straight

Talk"), a weekly television show made by young people that focuses on their issues; and youth parliaments in all 12 prefects, which teach young people about democracy and provide an elected forum for Albanians from 14 to 18 years old. The Social Research Centre in Albania's National Institute of Statistics has been supported and now plays a role in providing data and analysis for policy development for children. More investment is needed to strengthen its capacity.

18. These initiatives have been launched with the support of many partners. including the Canadian International Development Agency, Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), the Government of the Netherlands, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Authority (Sida), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the United Kingdom Department for International development, as well as the French, German, Italian, Slovenian, Swedish and United Kingdom Committees for UNICEF.

Lessons learned

19. Effective interventions are hindered by lack of disaggregated data on children, women and young people in Albania. Neither the situation analysis nor the poverty reduction strategy (NSSED) have been able to adequately represent the challenges facing children, young people and women due to a lack of subnational data disaggregated by gender and other criteria. The development of a knowledge base on children will depend on progress in these areas.

20. The process for preparing the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking of Children was participatory and intersectoral. It was prompted by the desire of Albania to join the European Union. Convergence between priority child rights issues and government priorities are critical to ensure concerted action on difficult and neglected issues. Furthermore, child trafficking was an entry point for tackling broader child protection issues, such as juvenile justice reform and reform of the social welfare system.

21. Lack of intersectoral coordination and programmes focused on issues have precluded a comprehensive approach to child protection. Interministerial working groups were established separately to address juvenile justice, child labour, child trafficking and disabilities. The Government's establishment of the Child Rights Unit will facilitate such interministerial collaboration.

The country programme, 2006-2010

Summary budget table

Programme	(In thousands of United States dollars) Regular resources	Other resources	Total
Social advocacy, planning and information	600	1 600	2 200
Children's health and development	920	3 120	4 040
Child, youth and family protection	635	7 280	7 915
Cross-sectoral costs	1 220	--	1 220
Total	**3 375**	**12 000**	**15 375**

Preparation process

22. The United Nations country team in Albania played a significant role in developing the NSSED. The Millennium Development Goals and data from *DevInfo* provided key inputs to the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The latter was developed through a series of workshops and thematic groups that used creative strategies including causal analysis, appreciative inquiry and problem trees and were based in human rights concepts. The Government endorsed the UNDAF and the individual country plans of each agency at a recent workshop in Tirana.

23. Based on the UNDAF, the new UNICEF country programme was developed through a broad consultative process involving the Government, civil society organizations, donors and youth and was guided by child rights. It supports the UNDAF outcomes, goals of the NSSED and the priorities of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan, as well as the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The development of the programme of cooperation by UNICEF and government officials put focus on the achievement of results. The preparation process reaffirmed the need to strengthen convergence among programmes, improve multisectoral coordination and further engage with civil society.

Goals, key results and strategies

24. The goal of the country programme is to support the Government, consistent with its obligations and responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in creating an enabling, protective and equitable environment where children and women, particularly the most vulnerable, progressively realize their rights.

25. Within the context of the UNDAF, the key results expected from the country programme are: (a) policies supportive of child rights are to be in place and government and public administrators at all levels will monitor and report on implementation; (b) marginalized youth and women will participate in decision-making and monitoring of child rights; (c) service providers will have the

knowledge and skills to deliver quality services to children, youth and women; and (d) the most vulnerable communities and families will demand basic health, education and protection services. These will be further refined and detailed in a results matrix that will be developed soon.

26. Four key strategies will be pursued. Support for policy development will cover health, education, ECD, child protection and juvenile justice and be based on evidence and best practices. Formulation of benchmarks and standards will be a second area of focus. Standards need to be in place to enable implementation, quality assurance and monitoring within the overall decentralization process. Establishing mechanisms for community participation, implementation and monitoring of child rights is the third strategy. Mechanisms will be developed at all levels to facilitate participation of a wide range of actors in the implementation and monitoring of child rights. The last strategy will focus on development of skills of professionals at all levels and families. Service providers will develop the knowledge and skills to deliver quality services according to established standards. Families will be equipped with the basic knowledge and skills to make effective use of quality basic services. The programme will focus primarily on the poorest regions of the country, including the northeast.

Relationship to national priorities and the UNDAF

27. The country programme supports national priorities for education, health, protection and poverty reduction, including the NSSED. The goals of the NSSED are to reduce poverty and income disparity; reduce infant and maternal mortality and disease rates; increase attendance in compulsory education and extend the average schooling period; and improve both governance and basic services.

28. Of the four UNDAF outcomes, the UNICEF country programme will directly support three: (a) a transparent and accountable Government, developing and implementing effective national policies aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals and integration with the European Union; (b) an enabling environment to increase people's participation in policy formulation and the national decision-making process; and (c) increased use of quality public services delivered in an efficient, transparent, accountable and equitable manner. The fourth UNDAF priority, regional development, will be supported by directing efforts towards the first three outcomes within specific regions. The specific role and contribution of UNICEF will specifically focus on incorporating a child rights perspective into development planning and policy making at all levels of government and lead among the United Nations country team in supporting quality basic services, but this outcome is also very important for a number of other agencies including the International Labour Organization/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization (WHO). These were identified in the UNDAF process and supported by the other members of the country team.

Relationship to international priorities

29. The country programme addresses all the priorities of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan, supports achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and was guided by the goals of *A World Fit for Children*. The programme will assist Albania to meet its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

30. The Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for universality of all services in an equitable manner. Ethnic minorities, including Roma and Egjvit, the rural poor in remote areas and migrants in peri-urban areas constitute a sizeable population of people who do not benefit from basic services. The Government is developing strategies to reach the most vulnerable. The country programme will contribute to disparity reduction and social inclusion.

Programme components

Social advocacy, planning and information

31. The Government has initiated efforts to improve the development of policies and planning for children. However, gaps remain. The Government recognizes the importance of creating a knowledge base on children and women and placing information in the public domain for greater participation by a wider range of actors. Encouraging the participation of civil society and the business community in the decision-making process is a goal of the Government and an important part of its strategy for integration in the European Union. The Government is developing a comprehensive National Plan of Action (NPA) for children to systematically address the realization of child rights in Albania.

32. Key results expected from this programme are that child rights policies will be harmonized to lay the ground for development of a children's code; issues of disadvantaged children will be accorded priority in national social and economic plans with adequate budgetary allocation; information and knowledge on children and young people will be produced regularly for effective monitoring at all levels; and civil society, communities and families in selected disadvantaged areas will participate in improving the availability and quality of services.

33. Advocacy and communication initiatives will keep child rights issues high on the national agenda. Creation of a knowledge base on children will assist in decision-making through disaggregated data collection and analysis. The results of analyses of determinants of child poverty and deprivation will inform strategies and resource allocation. Policies and legislation in the areas of ECD, health, juvenile justice, child protection and education will be aligned with international standards. The skills of the Childs Right Unit will be strengthened and mechanisms established to implement and monitor these policies at all levels. Mechanisms will be created for participation of communities and families in planning, implementing and monitoring of issues effecting children. The programme component will be implemented in partnership with other United Nations agencies, the European Union and other donors.

Children's health and development

34. Over the past decade, access to quality health, pre-school and education services has become limited, especially in such areas as the isolated northeast and among new migrants living in peri-urban areas, the poor and Roma. In health, emphasis has been on curative rather than preventive care. An unfulfilled demand for pre-school services, together with outdated curricula, learning materials, equipment and teaching methods, contributes to lower completion rates and learning achievement.

35. Key results to be achieved include: 70 per cent of marginalized children in selected areas will use quality ECD services and complete primary education with appropriate levels of learning; gender parity will be attained in education, especially for disadvantaged groups and Roma; a 20-per-cent reduction in micronutrient deficiencies of vitamin A and iron; achievement of universal salt iodization; and reduction in stunting among young children by 20 per cent.

36. This programme will contribute to increased access to and availability of quality health care, child development and education services in selected areas through the development of standards of care and regulatory mechanisms. Skills and capacities of professionals will be strengthened to deliver these services to children, young people and women. Reduction in stunting will be addressed through improving care practices of parents and care givers and increasing family access to health services. Newborn care, immunization services, birth registration and early child care and development services will be increasingly accessed by the most vulnerable communities. Pre-school education will help prepare children for primary education.

37. The programme component will be implemented in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, WHO, the World Bank, the European Union and other donors.

Child, youth and family protection

38. Poverty, decreased access to and quality of basic social services, and weakened community support mechanisms have limited the capacities of families to provide a nurturing and protective environment for their children. Although the prevalence rate for HIV/AIDS is low, increasing internal and external migration and risky behaviour among young people, coupled with lack of knowledge on HIV/AIDS, puts a large number of youth at risk. Young people's involvement in serious crimes is on the rise. The social services system does not address children's needs comprehensively.

39. This programme component aims to contribute to 80 per cent of young people having access to information and services, especially on HIV/AIDS; a 50-per-cent increase in young people using "youth-friendly" services including voluntary confidential counselling and testing; an increase in the number of at-risk children benefiting from an effective child protection system; a decrease in the number of juveniles in conflict with the law; and an increase in the number of juveniles sanctioned without being deprived of their liberty.

40. The country programme will strengthen national policies, institutional frameworks and service delivery in child protection, HIV/AIDS and juvenile justice. Institutional mechanisms will be developed to ensure the implementation of these policies and the decentralization of child protection services to regional and local levels. The capacities of professionals working with children at risk will be strengthened through training on child protection issues that is linked to newly developed standards for care. The development of a national referral and case management system for children at risk will be supported together with the establishment of regional-level coordination units and mandatory reporting systems for monitoring. The capacities of local government and NGOs will be strengthened to deliver a package of services (education, health, psychosocial and economic) to children at risk and their families.

41. In the area of juvenile justice, the country programme will support the Government in legislation and policy development; institutional capacity-building and alternatives to detention; protection and reintegration of children deprived of their liberty; and prevention of juvenile delinquency.

42. Support will be provided to the Government to expand "youth–friendly" services and strengthen the capacities of professionals in health, life skills and HIV/AIDS counselling and testing.

43. The programme will work with multilateral and bilateral donors including the European Union, DCI, the Government of the Netherlands, NORAD and Sida.

44. **Cross-sectoral** costs will cover the salaries of staff performing cross-cutting functions and relevant travel.

Major partnerships

45. The programme will be implemented in close collaboration with government counterparts at the national, regional and local levels and with United Nations agencies and international and national civil society organizations. UNICEF will continue to work with Ministries including those of Health; Education and Science; Culture, Youth and Sports; Labour and Social Affairs; Justice; and State and Local Government; as well as the Committee for Gender Balance and local and regional governments. This collaboration will emphasize education, health and protection and will focus on designing or revising legislation, developing mechanisms for enforcement, improving standards and monitoring implementation. Partnerships with children, adolescents and families will be enhanced across all programmes.

46. Existing networks of partners including interministerial task forces, civil society coalitions and alliances will continue to nurture information sharing and strengthen concrete action and advocacy efforts. Civil society will play a key role in monitoring and implementation of children's and women's rights and reaching communities with rights-based information. The media will continue to be supported as a key communication and advocacy partner.

47. UNICEF will build on good relations with external support agencies, including the bilateral government agencies present in Albania, the World Bank and the European Commission. Networking with National Committees for UNICEF will be strengthened. The United Nations country team will remain a key partner, with

collaboration pursued through several inter-agency working groups on topics such as HIV/AIDS, gender, education and communication.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

48. A five-year integrated monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed, linked to the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation framework. Planned evaluations will cover the delivery of services to children and at-risk families, parenting practices and the implementation of the NPA, in connection with the Government's annual reviews of the NSSED.

49. Key progress indicators will include: the number of policies adopted affecting children and women; and the degree of social inclusiveness and participation by marginalized groups and young people in programmes and decision-making processes. Other indicators to assess progress and measure results will include: availability and use of "child-friendly" services; knowledge of young people on HIV/AIDS prevention; elimination of iodine deficiency disorder; drop-out and learning achievement rates.

50. In close collaboration with the Government and other United Nations agencies, a knowledge base on children and women will be developed using the results of the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) and the *DevInfo* system. Another MICS will be conducted in 2010.

51. The UNICEF office in Tirana will carry out field trips and prepare progress reports. Annual reviews will be carried out with a mid-term review of the country programme taking place in 2008. Research, studies and evaluations will be conducted.

52. UNICEF will participate in the evaluation of the UNDAF in 2009 in cooperation with the United Nations country team, Government and other partners.

53. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be the coordinating body for the country programme, while line Ministries will continue to be partners in planning and implementation, and monitoring of the country programme.